

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3013

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E O 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, GE, GW, IT

SUBJ: ITALIAN EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN ATTEMPTS TO ASSESS
KILLING OF ITALIAN AT GDR BORDER

REFS: A) STATE 195322; B) BONN 13243

1. IN THE DEARTH OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE FATAL
SHOOTING OF AN ITALIAN TRUCK DRIVER THE MORNING OF AUGUST 5
AT THE HIRSCHBERG BORDER CROSSING INTO THE
FRG, AN EMB OFF CONTACTED THE ITALIAN EMBASSY IN EAST
BERLIN ABOUT THIS EVENT. ACCORDING TO ITALIAN EMBASSY
SOURCES THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SHOOTING STILL REMAIN
UNCLEAR AND THEIR ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN "THE STRAIGHT
STORY" FROM OFFICIALS IN THE GDR FOREIGN MINISTRY HAVE NOT
BEEN SUCCESSFUL. THE ITALIAN CHARGE' PROTESTED ON
THE DAY OF THE INCIDENT AUGUST 5 AND AGAIN ON AUGUST 6 ABOUT
THE LACK OF INFORMATION BEING PROVIDED BY OFFICIAL
GDR SOURCES. IN GENERAL THE ITALIANS BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE
NOT RECEIVED ANYWHERE NEAR A FULL ACCOUNT OF EVENTS.

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MOREOVER SOME OF THE INFORMATION THEY RECEIVED EARLY

HAS NOW BEEN CONCLUDED TO BE ERRONEOUS.

2. ITALIAN AMBASSADOR DELL'ELMO RETURNED FROM LEAVE IN ITALY ON AUGUST 7 TO TAKE CHARGE OF REPRESENTATIONS TO THE GDR FOREIGN MINISTRY. THE BODY OF THE SLAIN ITALIAN WAS FLOWN BACK TO ITALY ON AUGUST 8. THE EMBASSY IS NOW AWAITING THE RESULTS OF AN AUTOPSY TO DETERMINE WHAT FURTHER STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN WITH GDR AUTHORITIES.

3. EAST GERMAN COVERAGE OF THE EVENT HAS BEEN MINIMAL AND HAS MERELY NOTED THAT AN ITALIAN TRUCK DRIVER WAS SHOT DEAD IN ATTEMPTING TO ENTER THE GDR FROM THE FRG AT HIRSCHBERG. THERE HAVE BEEN NO OTHER PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS OR EXPLANATIONS OF THIS TRAGEDY. AN EDITORIAL IN NEUES DEUTSCHLAND ON AUGUST 9, HOWEVER, REPORTS THAT THE HANDLING OF THIS LATEST INCIDENT BY WEST GERMAN POLITICIANS AND REPORTERS IS HELPING TO EXACERBATE GDR/FRG RELATIONS (SEE SEPTEL).

4. COMMENT: IT APPEARS CLEAR THAT THE ITALIAN EMBASSY MAY NEVER KNOW THE EXACT REASONS WHY A GDR GUARD KILLED THE ITALIAN DRIVER AT HIRSCHBERG. THEY ARE INCLINED AT THIS STAGE TO ACCEPT THE VERSIONS APPEARING IN THE WESTERN PRESS UNTIL AND UNLESS CLARIFIED BY GDR AUTHORITIES. THEY ARE ALSO UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE ITALIAN TRUCK DRIVER MAY HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF THE "SCHUSSBEFEHL" GIVEN TO GDR BORDER GUARDS AND EMPHASIZED TO THEM BY HIGH GDR AUTHORITIES AFTER THE SEVERAL OTHER RECENT INCIDENTS OF "BORDER VIOLATION" BY FRG CITIZENS.COOPER

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